

Stepping Stones

by BeckoningCat

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Summary: Small moments, little stepping stones leading to their futures. One-shot stories, the first one posted during Kyoko x Ren week on Tumblr.

1. Chapter 1

****Spotlight****

****Author's Note:****

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><p>Kyouko didn't react to the hubbub at the back of the studio. The camera was still rolling on the last scene of the day and Natsu was in the middle of delivering a particularly nasty speech to her friends about her new plan of attack. She stalked out of the 'classroom' at the end of her speech and into the unfinished fake school corridor not visible to the camera. As soon as she was out of the spotlight, she sagged. Natsu was wearing on her a little that day. The amount of vitriol that she had to dig up from within her to embody Natsu looked great on camera, but these days, now that Kyouko herself had begun to settle and no longer ran on a constant supply of

grudge energy, she found the expenditure of malice to be rather draining.<p>

As soon as the director called 'Cut', Sudo-san followed her out of the set.

"Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God!" she whispered.

"What is it? Is something wrong?" asked Kyouko.

"It's Tsuruga Ren! He's visiting the set. Oh my God, why is he here? Do you think he's going to do a guest appearance? I haven't heard anything about it!"

Kyouko figured that if he had been hired to appear on _Box-R_, he would have told her. "I don't think that's it."

"Then why is he here?"

That's what Kyouko wanted to know. As far as she was aware, he would have only returned to Japan from his second trip to Guam a few hours before. Why would he come here first instead of LME? _Oh no, did I do something wrong in my portrayal of Setsuka Heel the other week? Did I cause him trouble? Is he here to tell me off?_

Kyouko took a few deep breaths to steady herself. Sudo-san seemed to be doing the same thing. _Oh. She's one of his fans,_ she thought.

Sudo-san rushed back out into the main set. Kyouko squared her shoulders and followed the other girl. She _wouldn't_ jump to conclusions. There was no indication yet that Tsuruga-san was there to tell her off, or that he was there to see her at all.

Tsuruga-san had affected the cast and crew, particularly the girls and women, like a super-magnet in a cutlery showroom. He stood in the middle of the crowd with his polite smile on, nodding and giving short answers to questions. All the while he looked over the heads of the people surrounding him, searching for someone in particular.

Then their eyes met. Kyouko's stomach flipped as he stopped scanning the set and continued looking at her. She barely even noticed that he pushed through the crowd and began walking her way.

She was painfully conscious of every pair of eyes in the vicinity turning to her. She stood straight as she could and then began to bow to him, intending to give him a polite "Gokurou-sama deshita" for his work in Guam.

"Wait," he said as he threw up a hand to stop her. "Don't drop character. I've been curious about Natsu for a while. So long as no one else minds." He looked around at the cast and crew to a murmur of assents, and a sea of smiles and nods.

Kyouko froze. It took her a few moments to change gears. She had to use her last-resort character change gesture â€” reaching up to 'grab' the Natsu spirit out of the air and then tap it into her chest. Then she shifted her stance into one of the model poses he had taught her. "Hm, is that so?" she said languidly.

A light flared in his eyes. For some reason, Kyouko thought of a fighter issuing a challenge. He stepped up into the classroom stage under the bright stage lights, which hadn't yet been turned off, and pulled a chair out from one of the desks. He swung a leg over and sat on the chair backwards. "Yeah, give me a demo."

Challenge accepted.

She walked slowly across the stage, eyeing him from top to toe with Natsu's piercing gaze. She allowed her eyes to linger on places she usually never dared to look when his attention was on her. Natsu wouldn't care if she was caught eyeing up a man. Inside, she was spinning in place, trying to get traction. She hadn't yet had a chance to play Natsu off an older, but not that old, man. In the drama, she only interacted with school students and teachers. How would Natsu react to a man like Tsuruga Ren?

"You're pretty bold, just stepping on into the classroom here," she said. "Are you lost? Trying to make your way to a parent / teacher meeting?"

"Do I look old enough to be a parent of a high school student?"

He eyed her up too. She couldn't believe it. He was actually looking at her legs as he spoke. What kind of character had he created? Because she was sure now that he hadn't stepped onto the set as Tsuruga Ren. In those few moments between when he'd issued the challenge and she'd accepted he'd thrown together a character. But who was he?

"Someone's older sibling, then. Who are you looking for? Let me know." She sat sideways on the desk in front of him, crossing her legs in a way that was superficially demure but which displayed a large swathe of thigh to him. "Maybe I could ... help."

I can't help but play it this way! thought Kyouko. _Natsu doesn't back down from challenges, and she'd interpret a hot guy objectifying her as a challenge! _

"I'm looking for Kitagawa Natsu. Are you her?"

She pulled her cell phone out of her pocket out of his view and flicked it to silent mode. "Who's asking?"

"That doesn't matter. Are you Kitagawa? The girl who thinks she's judge, jury and executioner in this class?"

Kyouko pursed her lips. "You're someone's boyfriend, right? Your girlfriend has been telling tall tales about me to justify her own feelings of inadequacy, and you've run here in White Knight mode to protect her." She smiled, not letting the smile reach her eyes. "You've heard a one-sided story." She pulled Natsu's lip gloss and mirror out of her skirt pocket and reapplied the makeup. Still looking at herself in the mirror, not him, she said, "Are you quite sure you're happy being with a girl so juvenile she'd sic you like an attack dog on a classmate she had a little disagreement with?" She looked at him out the corner of her eye. "Are you sure you're not just here because you'd do anything, no matter how silly, to avoid being alone?"

She put the lip gloss and mirror away while she watched his hands tighten on the back of the chair. She shifted her thighs as she did so, bringing his attention to her legs again. This is what Natsu did: she was a keen observer of human nature, but she used that power for evil rather than good. She figured out what made people tick and then used it against them. But Kyouko didn't know this character of Tsuruga-san's well enough to do that.

She did know Tsuruga-san, though.

"Or maybe you're thinking that if you do enough things that will please her, she won't notice that you're damaged goods; just another rage-filled, broken, petty man."

Colour drained out of his face. He jumped up out of the chair. "What's wrong with you? I ought toâ€" "

"Uh, uh, uh," she said. "You do anything at all to me, or say anything at all about our encounter, then I'll just have to make sure your girlfriend sees this." She held out her cell phone to him, showing him the photo she had taken. She was quite impressed with what she'd managed to capture, even though she had been hiding the cell phone from him (but not the watching cast and crew): him, clearly ogling her legs. "How happy would she be to know that you came here and eyed me up?"

He grabbed for the cell phone, but she slipped off the desk and danced out of his reach. She tut-tutted. "You shouldn't bully girls. Besides, I have my camera set to automatically backup to the internet. Even if you delete this copy, I'll still have it."

"You don't even know who to send that to."

"Hm. I guess I'll just have to send it to everyone then. While asking if anyone knows the creep who was lurking in our classroom perving at young girls."

He gritted his teeth.

Kyouko gave him a sweet smile. "Buh-bye, mister!" She waved.

Tsuruga-san stalked off the set into the dark back area that represented the hallway.

The applause of the watching cast and crew brought Kyouko back to reality. She figured the scene was over now and she could drop character. She bowed to everyone, but something niggled at her as she did so. Tsuruga-san had walked towards the back of the set and hadn't yet emerged. Kyouko ran the lines she'd ad-libbed through her mind. Oh no! she thought. "Sorry, excuse me," she said to no one in particular. Then she ran after Tsuruga-san.

He was sitting on the floor in the furthest dark corner with his knees up and head in his hands. Kyouko approached him slowly and knelt on the ground before him.

"Tsuruga-san?" When he didn't reply, she folded over into a dogeza, resting her forehead on the ground between his feet. "I'm so sorry."

Please forgive me."

He didn't say anything at first. After a long moment she heard him move, then he pushed her by her shoulders into a sitting position. His eyes looked a little watery, but it was hard to see in the gloom.

"Don't apologise," he said. The tears he was fighting made themselves known in his voice.

"But I just hurt you, didn't I? Very badly, it looks like. I didn't mean to do that. It's justâ€"

"It's OK, Mogami-san. You know your character well. You said what she would have said. You did what she would have done."

"But I used her techniques on you, not your character." Tears pricked at her eyes. "I used the things I learned about you during the Heel sibling act to hurt you."

He sighed and hung his head. "Come here," he said.

"I'm already here." She was kneeling between his feet. How much closer could she get?

He reached out and pulled her into his arms. She wasn't expecting it, so she face-planted into his chest with her butt in the air. She shifted her lower body to the side to sit on her hip between his legs with her upper body leaning against his chest and her head on his shoulder. She was still totally off-balance and would need his help to extricate herself from his embrace. Her heart thudded and heat suffused her face. Was it her imagination, or did his heart beat similarly fast?

"I missed you," he whispered into her ear. "I was worried about you. You had that meeting with your mother, and then soon after I had to go back to Guam and I couldn't help anymore. Are you OK?"

"Y-yeah. I'm OK. Are you? Was Guam OK?"

"Yeah, we got everything finished. I'm good."

"That's good."

Kyouko's heart thudded even harder when their brief conversation ended and Tsuruga-san showed no signs of letting her go.

"U-um," said Kyouko.

"Shhh." He rubbed a hand down and up her back, similar to how he'd held her the night she had cried all over him, but this time he seemed to be soothing himself with the gesture.

"But the others ..."

As if on cue, Sudo-san walked into the backstage area, followed by the director.

"Hello?" called Sudo-san.

"Kyouko-san, Tsuruga-san," called the director. "Are you still here? Oh!"

"Oh my God!" cried Sudo-san. Her jaw literally dropped.

Kyouko jumped and tried unsuccessfully to push herself away from Tsuruga-san. "It's not what it looks like!"

"I'm sorry, you probably want to close up the set," said Tsuruga-san as he pushed against the wall with one hand and held her around the waist with the other, hoisting them both upright. "We'll get going now. Do you want a ride, Mogami-san? I'm free for the rest of the evening."

"Um, uh, um." Kyouko stepped away from him and bowed. "If it's no problem, I would be most grateful, sempai, if you deigned to drop your lowly kouhai off at home." Then she bowed to the director and the still-frozen Sudo-san. "_Osakini shitsurei shimasu!_"

"_Gokurou-sama deshita_," said the director. He wore a knowing grin. No doubt his imagination was running wild!

With that, Kyouko ran off the set towards her dressing room, her face still aflame.

Mogami Kyouko, 17, caught in an intimate embrace with a man on set. How was she ever going to live this down?

* * *

><p>Osakini shitsurei shimasu â€" what you say when you leave work before others.
__Gokurou-sama deshita â€" what you say to someone who is leaving work, or who has finished a task._

2. Chapter 2

****Flustered****

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><p>When Tsuruga-san had found out that Shoutarou had thrown her against a concrete pillar in a parking lot, she had thought that he would get angry. She had steeled herself for the vortex of cold rage and had almost been disappointed when it didn't eventuate. Almost. He

had definitely been angry, but instead he bit down on that anger. His fists had clenched, but he had made them relax.<p>

"Do you have time to come over this evening?"

"Um, ah, yes?"

"Come on over when you can, and bring your workout gear."

She now stood outside his door with her workout clothes in a shoulder bag, nervously shuffling her feet. The door swung open. He wore gym shorts, a tank top and a headband to keep his hair out of his eyes. He looked very different than normal.

"Good evening, Mogami-san. Come on in."

She followed him into the apartment in a daze.

"You have your workout gear, right? Go get changed in the spare room and then come into the living room."

She changed into leggings, a t-shirt and indoor trainers, and left her street clothes in a neat pile on one of the stuffed chairs in the room. Then she went into the wide living room. The doors of a cupboard she had never taken much notice of stood wide. Half a gym had apparently spilled out. A patch of carpet was covered with interlocking panels of exercise flooring, a free-standing punching bag stood nearby, and to the other side lay a weights bench with a row of free weights stored underneath.

"Is this where you exercise? Right here in your apartment?"

"Yep. It makes it easier to find the time." He briefly looked her up and down, then looked away. "Um, I guess we don't need this stuff." He started dragging the weights bench away from the exercise mat. "I was using it earlier is all."

When he was happy with the exercise area, he went to the cupboard, pulled out something small, and then swivelled the doors around on a hidden axle before closing them backwards. The doors had mirrors on the back. He really had converted half his living room into a gym!

He turned to her and put his hands on his hips. "I want to teach you a few self-defence techniques, if that's OK. I can't stop that guy from being a jerk, and I can't be your 24/7 bodyguard; even if you lived here, you have your own life to lead. But I can teach you a few tricks that might help you defend yourself if you're ever attacked like that again, whether by him or anyone else, OK?"

Kyouko flushed. If she lived here? How would that even happen? Tsuruga-san's loose wording strikes again. But at least he said I have my own life to lead. That sounds â€| good._

She dismissed her foolish thoughts and raised an eyebrow at him. "Isn't it better to teach men not to assault women in the first place than to teach women how to deal with assaults?"

He snorted. "In a perfect world, yeah. But I don't have any influence over Fuwa. I can only do this. Do you want to learn?"

She considered for a moment, then nodded. "Self defence wouldn't just help me with that guy, would it? It might be helpful in a role too."

"That's right."

"I want to learn!"

"OK. Do you know how to put on wrist wraps?" He held out two coils of red fabric to her. "Don't worry: they're clean."

"Um, I don't know what those are."

"They're to protect your wrists and hands while hitting things." He gave the punching bag a light punch. "Hold out your hands."

She did as he said and bit her lip as he stepped close and wound the tough strips of fabric around her wrists and palms. Then he picked up a pair of padded fingerless gloves with similar straps attached and put them on his own hands.

"Sorry I don't have padded wraps like these for you. I only have them in large."

Kyouko nodded. She wasn't sure of the difference.

"OK, first I want to make sure you know how to hit without hurting yourself. Many of the self-defence tips I'll be teaching you will involve hitting an attacker somewhere vulnerable and then running away once they're down, but I want to make sure you wouldn't break a wrist in the process."

Kyouko saluted. "Understood."

Tsuruga-san demonstrated a few punches on the punching bag. "You want to have your thumb on the outside like this, and hit with this part of your fist. Keep your wrist locked straight or you could injure it. Here: have a go."

She held her fist like his and tried hitting like he did.

"Keep your wrist straight!"

She tried again.

Over the next twenty minutes, he had her work on her punches until he was satisfied. He told her how to stand so she could put her weight into it and push off with her legs. He also showed her how to do a palm strike.

"Why aren't we wearing boxing gloves?" she asked when her hands started to get sore.

"Because you won't be wearing gloves if someone catches you by surprise. Hitting a person hurts your hands more than a punching bag. Those wrist wraps are only to protect your wrists until you get the hang of it. Don't get me wrong; it's best to use boxing gloves if you're exercising. But this is different."

She nodded in acceptance of his words. He was a rather stern instructor, but it made her a little happy that he wasn't treating her like a delicate flower.

When he was satisfied that she could hit well enough, he started showing her where to hit an assailant. Kyouko was a bit shocked at some of the places he was suggesting she should hit people if attacked. A palm strike to the solar plexus was one thing, but could she really punch someone in the throat? And what about kicking a man in the genitals?

"Isn't that cruel?" she asked. "I heard that it hurts a lot."

"It absolutely does. But if someone has already attacked you they don't deserve your consideration."

"Well I guess I could hit someone if I was scared. But what if someone grabs me and I can't hit them. What do I do then?"

"You can escape. Take the wraps off and come here, please." He unwrapped his own wrists and then beckoned her onto the mat. "The first thing you need to consider is that you're fairly small. You're not all that short for a Japanese woman, but you are slender and so I guess you don't weigh all that much. If you're attacked, God forbid, you're likely to be attacked by someone heavier and stronger than you. May I demonstrate?"

"S-sure."

He walked behind her and put his arms around her, pinning her arms to her sides. She stood still. Her heart thudded at the closeness. His scent was stronger than usual because of his earlier workout, but it didn't smell bad to her at all.

"Can you get away from me? Have a go." She felt his words rumble through her back as well as hearing them close to her ear.

She struggled against his grip. Even planting her feet widely and putting her thighs into it got her nowhere. She stopped struggling and just stood in his arms, panting. "No. You've got me trapped."

"Exactly. This is what happens when you try to match strength for strength. Unless your assailant is a similar size or smaller than you, you're not going to succeed. So you have to go about it another way."

"So what do I do? Yelling might work, right?"

"And it might not. You have two main ways of fighting back against a stronger opponent who has you trapped: disrupting their balance, or doing something unexpected. Do you remember that you threw me when we were the Heel siblings?"

Kyouko remembered that night, sure, but her strongest memory wasn't of how she threw him. It was of straddling his bare torso and giving him a hickey. She felt her face go bright red. Did he have to bring up that night while he was holding her against his chest again?

"U-um, yes. I remember that."

"You managed to do that because you used my weight against me. You pulled me off balance then flipped me over once you had me in a position where I couldn't stop you. This is the same principle."

"I, uh, I don't really remember how I did that. And we're standing up this time."

"Try tugging me odd directions and see what happens."

She tried for a while, but got nowhere.

"Try using one of your legs to push mine."

She tried again. She really wished that he hadn't made them face the mirror. Yes, she could see what she was doing, but she could also see him with his arms around her, and he could see her tomato-red face.

"Why don't you just tell me how to do it, Tsuruga-san?" she snapped out in exasperation.

"Because there are lots of ways, and you need to find the way that's best for you. And no two people will restrain you in exactly the same way, so it's the problem-solving part of getting someone off-balance that's most important. Besides it's more fun this way." He grinned at her in the mirror.

"Playboy!" she cried. She pushed his right leg with hers and dropped her left shoulder.

She was satisfied to see his eyes go wide in the mirror as he toppled to the side. He dropped his left arm from her and put his hand on the ground. She wrenched herself away from his right arm and danced out of his grip. Then she jumped into the air.

"I did it! You didn't fake that, right? I did it myself?"

"Yep, you did it. I guess you're good at fuelling yourself with anger. Good job."

She put her hands on her hips and grinned while he straightened himself.

"Next, try doing a similar thing while I hold you like this." He approached her from the side and held her in a different tight grip. She sighed and started again.

They went through the same trial and error process with Tsuruga-san restraining her in various ways and Kyouko wriggling and pushing at him until she managed to escape. They weren't all close holds; sometimes he just held an arm or a shoulder or a handful of her hair, but those were some of the trickier holds to get out of because she had to be careful not to wrench her own joints or rip her hair out. Sometimes he gave her tips, such as, 'See what happens if you push my elbow,' or, 'Check where my left foot is.' She wondered if this was a normal way of teaching self-defence, but then she supposed judo and aikido have even more body contact, so it couldn't be that weird.

After she escaped for the seventh time she held up a hand. "Can we

take a quick break?"

"Of course. Just a moment." He went to the kitchen and returned with two bottles of Pocari Sweat*.

"Hey, Tsuruga-san," she said after a long drink. "How do you know stuff like this? You're so big you don't need to know tactics like this. Most people are smaller than you."

"Not everyone. Besides, I know techniques like this because I was first taught self defence when I was a little boy, quite a bit smaller than you are now."

"Why? Isn't that a bit unusual?"

"It was a family thing. Shall we continue? This time, let's try surprise rather than unbalancing."

This time he did give her clear instructions. When he pretended to hold her around the neck, he told her to ignore his hands and jab him in the throat instead. When he held her from behind he told her to unlock her knees and make herself small to slither out of his grip (and that in a real assault she could knock the back of her head into her assailant's private parts on the way down). Eventually she got the hang of it, suggesting the correct solutions to the problems as soon as he raised them.

"This is all well and good, Tsuruga-san," she said, "and I appreciate you teaching me all this. But I'm afraid that in an emergency I would forget how to do all this and just panic. In a real attack it would all happen so fast, right? I'd barely have time to think."

"That's true. That's why it will be good for you to review all of this repeatedly and practice with another person. Your friend Kotonami-san, maybe. Or me. I'd be happy to help again. If you practice a lot the moves will become second nature and you won't need to think about it."

"I guess so. But I'd still like to try it at speed. Could you attack me like a real attacker?"

He paled. "What?"

"You know: use your acting ability to make it feel real so I know what it feels like."

"You want me to attack you?"

Kyouko held up her hands. "I don't mean actually hurt me. Just make it feel real so I can see how fast and scary it would be. And I wouldn't hit you for real either, especially not, um, there." She felt her face heating as she referred to that part of his anatomy.

He rubbed his jaw. "OK, if you really insist." He twirled a finger to get her to face away from the mirror and then stood behind her somewhere. "Are you ready?"

She stood tall and straightened her shoulders. "Ready!"

He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. He didn't move for several heartbeats. Then he grabbed Kyouko's shoulder and spun her around. He reached for her mouth.

"NG!" she called out around his hand.

He stepped back. "Was that too much?"

"No, it wasn't enough! I'm rougher than that with Mouko-san if I haven't seen her for a few days. Do it properly, please, Tsuruga-san. You won't hurt me."

He sighed and ran a hand over his hair. "Fine, OK. Turn around."

She did so and waited, tension oozing through her shoulders.

She squeaked as she was yanked off her feet. His arms tightened around her like a vice. One hand covered her mouth. She kicked her legs but couldn't reach him or the ground. He roughly pushed her against the wall beside the cupboard. At first her cheek and breasts were smashed into the wall, not quite enough to hurt, and then he flipped her around so she faced him.

He wore a cold grin like the one she had seen on Cain's face as he fought Murasame-san. He held her right wrist against the wall above her shoulder and clutched her neck. Again, not very hard, but enough that she couldn't move. He looked like a predator. He looked like he didn't know her at all.

She froze.

But only for a second.

She jabbed him (lightly) in the throat with her free hand then twisted the elbow of the arm that held her throat up until he had to let go or wrench his shoulder. Her right hand was still restrained so she kicked the inside of his thigh (instead of higher up). He clutched at his groin as if she had kicked him there, and she pushed past him, free. In her haste she tripped over the exercise mat. Well and truly caught up in the scene, she felt tears dripping down her face. "Help!" she called out as she stumbled towards his sofa.

And, cut, she thought to herself. She wiped her face and then turned around to thank him.

He was on his knees near the wall. His face was as white as a ghost.

"I-I'm sorry," he said, apparently flustered. No, not flustered. It was more than that. "I'm so sorry, Mogami-san." He bowed. "Please forgive me." His hands were shaking.

Kyouko dropped to her knees in front of him. "What for?"

He kept his eyes low. "I didn't mean to scare you. I'm so sorry."

Kyouko stared at him blankly. It took her a long moment to process what he said. "You didn't scare me."

He straightened and looked at her with wide eyes. "What?"

"You didn't scare me. I wasn't scared."

"But you were crying and calling for help."

"Why would you think that I would actually be scared of you, Tsuruga-san? I _trust_ you. I was just caught up in the scene is all."

"You were acting?"

"Yeah, of course!"

"You were _acting_."

"Yup." She grinned. "I couldn't help but be swept away by the scene."

He rubbed the lower half of his face with his palm and stared off to the side. He laughed, but his eyes were still wide. "I wouldn't blame you if you had been scared," he said in a low voice. His nails had turned purple as if his hands were freezing.

Before stopping to think about what she was doing, she leaned forward, held either side of his face, and pressed a kiss onto his forehead in the same spot that Setsuka had once kissed Cain. Then she took one of his hands. It was cold. She rubbed warmth into it.

He stared at her for a long silent moment. "You're fine," he said.

"Yes, I'm fine. Really." She gave him her most positive grin to prove it. She didn't dare point out how _not_ fine he looked, because she didn't understand why he was so shaken, and she already knew she wouldn't ask. Not yet.

"I'm sorry for over-reacting." He touched the spot she'd kissed with his free hand. "Thank you for bringing this foolish man back to his senses yet again, Mogami-san. This is starting to become a habit." He smiled one of his true smiles.

Relief washed over her. He seemed to be coming right. That warm smile shot straight through her and she couldn't help but reply with a shy smile of her own. They were so close. They were _really_ close. Kyouko felt dizzy. Was she falling towards him? What was happening? Why was her gaze dropping of its own accord to his lips?

"Ah!" she cried as she tumbled back.

His smile dropped and he almost looked disappointed.

Oh no, does he think I screamed because I hate him?

"Um, ah, could you please, um," she said, fully flustered as she tried to find an excuse for backing off. "Um! Could you show me that move again? Er, the one with the elbow? You know, the thing with the, um, angle. I don't think I got it right." She stood on the exercise mat again.

He sighed and stood too. "Sure, Mogami-san. Whatever you like." He smirked at her and ran a thumb over her cheek. "You're blushing, you know."

She covered her cheeks with her hands. "I am not! I'm just red because of all the physical exertion. The exercise! The exercise." Her face burned even brighter.

He snorted. "OK. Once more from the top."

* * *

><p>* Pocari Sweat " an actual sports drink. I don't think whoever came up with the name realised how gross it would sound to natural English speakers. In my mind Ren drinks Pocari Sweat instead of the more pleasant-sounding alternative Aquarius to "prove" his persona to himself.

* * *

><p>I'm really not sure why both of these stories I wrote for the Kyoko x Ren week ended up with her inadvertently triggering Ren's pain. I guess that it's because showing true vulnerability is a sign of closeness.

I don't actually know self-defence, so I hope my description was plausible enough.

End
file.